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The Tin Plate Industry: With Special Reference to Its Relations with the Iron and Steel Industries. By J. H. JONES. London: P. S. King & Co., 1914. 8vo, pp. xxii+280. 7s. 6d.

This study of a particular industry, concerning which there has been much discussion, is the product of efforts put forth at various times. The book contains much historical material which was written several years ago. Additions which were made just previous to publication comprise discussions of the causes and results of the localization of the industry, the growth of large-scale production and of the export trade, market relations, the relations of the steel and tin-plate industries, the movement toward combination, and the organization of labor.

That the writer has a good grasp of economic interpretation is shown by the fact that none of these subjects is discussed as an independent topic. Moreover, on p. 86 and thereafter he considers the many factors other than the tariff which have affected the growth of the American industry and the conditions of the Welsh industry. These include skill of labor, uncertainty respecting the tariff, financial conditions, and the fall in prices of steel.

The interdependence of the different features of the industry is best shown in the treatment of the effect of the tariff on economic organization, and of the relation of economic organization to labor organization. In the United States the system of combining a duty on tin plates with a drawback on tin plates used by exporters doubtless favored the large exporters such as the Standard Oil Company. Undoubtedly the tariff assisted in the formation of the American tin-plate trust. On the other hand, the success of the American industry forced Welsh producers to combine in self-protection in a free-trade country. Economic organization, in turn, was related to labor organization. In the period of Welsh monopoly the iron industry and the tin-plate industry were closely allied. Labor organizations, which were largely a failure, comprised both iron-workers and tin-plate workers. Since the introduction of steel the tin-plate workers have become more effectively organized on narrower lines. That the success of strikes depends in part on economic prosperity is amply demonstrated. Strikes have never proved a success in Wales when a depression was pending. They have considerable chance of success in times of increasing prosperity. There is some indication too that labor organization and depression together encouraged the organization of employers' associations which were in part price-controlling agencies in the Welsh industry.

There is no evidence of partisan treatment respecting the tariff in the statement that

No better illustration can be found of the application of the infant industry argument for protection. The United States industry, born less than twenty-five years ago, has outgrown the parent industry of South Wales. The ardent protectionist will discover much to make him rejoice if he examine the American tin plate industry, and nearly as much to make him weep in a study of German development—or absence of it. The convinced free-trader will find food for sad reflection in the history of the nineties in South Wales, but the abundant evidence of recuperative power which subsequent movements afford may leave him on good terms with his theory.

The chance remark about the German industry is unfortunately not supported by any discussion of the German situation.

One result of the fact that the book was written at various periods is that it is not so well co-ordinated and is not so complete a unit as it ought to be. It is particularly noticeable that, notwithstanding the fact that the author discusses the effect of the American tariff on both the American and the Welsh industries, he does not give sufficient attention to the present conditions and future prospects of the American industry. While the writer's interest is obviously centered in the Welsh tin-plate industry, yet there is as much reason for considering the conditions of the American industry today as for considering the effect of the McKinley tariff in the nineties. The book lacks also discussions of the German industry and of labor conditions in the American industry, the latter a vital topic. Even discussion of the labor problem in the Welsh industry receives more attention in certain parts of the book than in others. For instance, a great part of the last chapter discusses the conditions of labor, though the earlier discussion of the problem does not warrant such extended treatment.

This failure to provide perfect co-ordination and uniformity is probably the cause of the lack of concise and definite conclusions. The reader does not find a brief summary for the individual chapters or for the book as a whole. With few exceptions one can arrive at conclusions only by working out for himself the propositions intended to be presented. The style is not all that one could wish, but it is fair for a topic so difficult to treat in an interesting fashion. The author makes frequent use of quotations, and in a few cases makes no reference to the source. The study, which is suggestive and which shows good economic interpretation, nevertheless leaves the impression that it was hurried to completion after a few years of neglect. It does not maintain the reputation of the best English scholars.

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